WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

How has the CHURCH been perverted?

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By Joe Myers

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Born in 1962 and raised in a quaint city near Pittsburgh (PA), Joe Myers enjoyed a happy childhood in small town America. In 2004, with his wife and two teen daughters, he relocated to Jacksonville, Florida, in pursuit of year-round sunshine and mild winters. With his children grown, he and his wife now enjoy adventures with 4 grandchildren.

Over the past 25 years God has been prompting Joe as to the distorted Biblical view of what the mainstream calls the "CHURCH" today.

This book is FREE as Joe is committed not to profit from the wisdom of God and His plan and purpose for our lives. We should all freely share the wisdom God has given us.

What you do with what you will read is between you and God.

Joe has received push back for sharing what you will read but he is committed to serving God and not man.

Please pray and ask God to speak to you as you read this short book but most importantly the **Bible** which is the **Word of God**.

Finally, DO NOT listen to Joe, ONLY let the **Holy Spirit** speak to you and guide you!

TRIUNE GOD

Who is God?

God is:

- **Omnipotent**

Means God's all-powerful nature has no limitations. It means that God is in complete control of His Creation. Omnipotent is to recognize that there is nothing outside of His ability to accomplish and no one can exercise power over Him. God created the entire universe and anything we have knowledge of or do not have knowledge of, and He holds the power over it all.

- **Omniscient**

Means God has total knowledge of everything, including the past and future. God is Sovereign over His creation of all things, whether visible or invisible. His omniscience is not restricted by any one person in the Godhead. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all by nature omniscient.

- **Omnipresent**

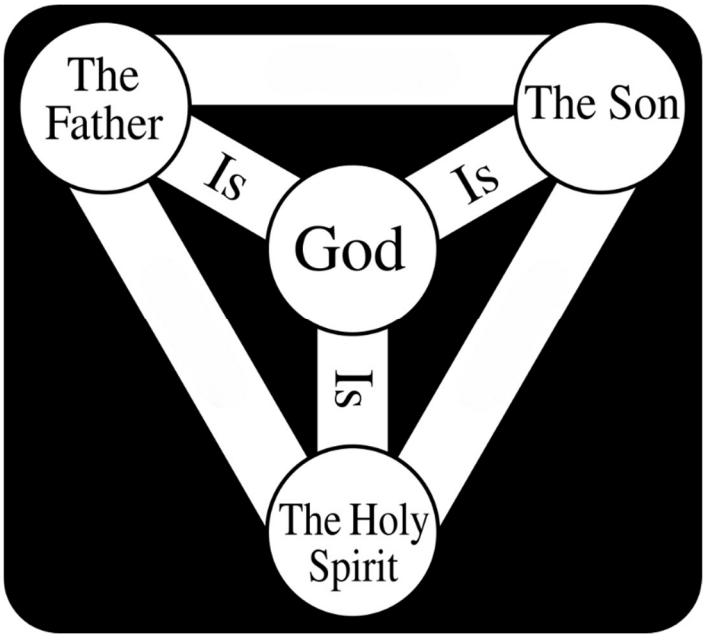
Means God is everywhere at the same time and inhabits the entirety of ALL that He has Created.

Together, these three attributes define God's Lordship, and help to provide a deeper understanding of Creation, Providence, and Salvation.

We must always remember, God never changes as He tells us in **Hebrews 13:8**:

"Jesus Christ yesterday, and today, the same also *is* forever."

We have to understand the **Father**, the **Son** and the **Holy Spirit** are **ONE** as the **TRIUNE GOD**.



While there are many verses from **God's Holy Word** that bear the TRUTH of the **TRIUNE GOD** the following are just a few:

John 14:8-10

8 Philip said unto him, Lord, show us thy Father, and it sufficeth us.

*9 Jesus said unto him, I have been so long time with you, and hast thou not known me, Philip? **he that hath seen me, hath seen my Father**: how then sayest thou, Show us thy Father?*

*10 Believest thou not, that **I am in the Father**, and the **Father is in me**? The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself: **but the Father that dwelleth in me**, he doeth the works.*

2 Corinthians 3:17–18

*[17] Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the **Spirit of the Lord** is, there is liberty.*

*[18] But we all behold as in a mirror the glory of the Lord with open face, and are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, **as by the Spirit of the Lord**.*

1 Corinthians 8:6

*Yet unto us there is **but one God**, **which is that Father**, of whom are all things, and we in him, and **one Lord Jesus Christ**, by whom are all things, and we by him.*

What does Matthew 27:51 mean?

And behold, the veil of the Temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom, and the earth did quake, and the stones were cloven (split).

There were many Heavenly events that take place at the moment of Jesus' death.

Matthew 27:50:

Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice, and yielded up the ghost.

Matthew tells us the curtain of the temple is ripped in half "***from the top to the bottom***" which refers to the inner curtain between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place **Exodus 26:33:**

Afterward thou shalt hang the veil on the hooks, that thou mayest bring in thither, that is, within the veil, the Ark of the Testimony: and the veil shall make you a separation between the Holy place and the most holy place.

This separated where only the high priest could enter once every year. That high priest was to make a sacrifice for sin on behalf of the people. At that time if anyone entered God's presence they would die.

The curtain was huge and was made of extremely thick material that could not be easily cut or that anyone could tear. For the curtain to split in half would have been an amazing event but to tear it from top to bottom could have only been done by God.

The religious leaders who saw this all happen knew how Jesus' death on the cross made it possible for anyone to come to God through faith in Him as detailed in **Hebrews 9:11—10:22**.

Anyone can now enter the presence of God through Jesus as their Savior. We no longer need the system of sacrifice God gave to Israel because Jesus was and is the perfect SACRIFICE for evermore. Jesus has become the Mediator between God and man **1 Timothy 2:5:**

For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, which is the man Christ Jesus

We have lost sight of **1 Samuel 8:4-22** when God told the Israelites that He was their King, and then He warned the Israelites of the oppression they would encounter if they wanted their own king. Who is your **King** or **king**?

4 Wherefore all the Elders of Israel gathered them together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah,

5 And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: make us now a King to judge us like all nations.

6 But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a King to judge us: and Samuel prayed unto the Lord.

7 And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hear the voice of the people in all that they shall say unto thee: for they have not cast thee away, but they have cast me away, that I should not reign over them.

8 As they have ever done since I brought them out of Egypt even unto this day, (and have forsaken me, and served other gods) even so do they unto thee.

9 Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit, yet testify unto them, and show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.

10 So Samuel told all the words of the Lord unto the people that asked a king of him.

11 And he said, This shall be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: he will take your sons, and appoint them to his chariots, and to be his horsemen,
and some shall run before his chariot.

12 Also he will make them his captains over thousands, and captains over fifties, and to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make instruments of war, and the things that serve for his chariots.

13 He will also take your daughters and make them Apothecaries, and Cooks, and Bakers.

14 And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your best Olive trees, and give them to his servants.

15 And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give it to his Eunuchs, and to his servants.

16 And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and the chief of your young men, and your asses, and put them to his work.

17 He will take the tenth of your sheep, and ye shall be his servants.

18 And ye shall cry out at that day, because of your king, whom ye have chosen you, and the Lord will not hear you at that day.

19 But the people would not hear the voice of Samuel, but did say, Nay, but there shall be a king over us.

20 And we also will be like all other nations, and our king shall judge us, and go out before us and fight our battles.

21 Therefore when Samuel heard all the words of the people, he rehearsed them in the ears of the Lord.

22 And the Lord said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, Go every man unto his city.

God warns us of destruction when we do not heed **Hosea 4:6:**

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast refused knowledge, I will also refuse thee that thou shalt be no Priest to me: and seeing thou hast forgotten the Law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.

While this chapter is just scraping the surface, we can see the AWESOMENESS of **God the Father**, **God the Son** and **God the Holy Spirit** to lead us into the next chapters.

THE CHURCH?

This chapter will review the **Church** that the **Bible teaches** vs. **Religious Organization Profit Centers (ROPC)** that is an agenda to make a profit and pay salaries, benefits, etc. to those controlling or are part of an **ROPC** with **God's money**.

What is God's money? God is very clear in **Haggai 2:9** that He owns ALL the gold and silver, which also means everything that money can purchase or be utilized for:

"The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts."

As we study the question **"The Church?"** I would encourage you to keep in mind the following:

John 8:31-32

"Then said Jesus to the Jews which believed in him, If ye continue in my word, ye are verily my disciples,

And shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

This quote is by Thomas Hardy.

"There is a condition worse than blindness, and that is, seeing something that isn't there."

Has the word **eisegesis** been used to pervert the **Church**?

"*Eisegesis is a method of interpreting the Bible by reading one's own ideas, biases, or agendas into the text, rather than interpreting its actual meaning. The word literally means "to lead into". Eisegesis can be intentional or unintentional, and it can be used to "prove" a pre-existing point or to support a particular agenda. For example, a preacher might use a passage from the Gospels about Jesus to make a point that's completely out of context.*"

Because God has been laying on my heart the issue of the Church, He revealed the following article that is on the website of a BIBLICAL Church in India, ***Christian Fellowship Church.*** This article puts in words far better than I can articulate as to what **God** intended the Church to be since the **Death** and **Resurrection** of **Jesus Christ**:

The Financial Policy Of Jesus And The Church

Jesus has given us an example in money-matters that all who serve Him and all churches must follow.

When Jesus worked as a carpenter, up to the age of 30, He earned his living - honestly, without ever cheating anyone and without ever getting into debt.

Thereafter, He was in full-time ministry for the next 3½ years. During this period, He had some strict principles in financial matters. His apostles followed those principles exactly and rigidly. The church is the Body of Christ and therefore it must follow the same principles that the first Body of Christ (Jesus Himself) followed. All churches and all who are engaged in Christian work must follow those same principles.

What were those principles?

First and foremost, since Jesus was a servant of His Father, He trusted His Father alone to provide all His earthly needs - just like anyone working for a company would expect that company to take care of his financial needs. So Jesus never ever told anyone other than His Father about His financial needs. He never advertised His ministry anywhere and He never gave any reports about His work to anyone to get their support. God Himself directly prompted some people to give gifts to Jesus voluntarily - and He accepted such gifts. Jesus appointed a treasurer (Judas) to keep the money that He thus received.

*See **Luke 8:2,3**: "Mary Magdalene and Joanna (the wife of Chuza, Herod's palace-manager), and Susanna, and many others contributed to the support of Jesus and the 12 disciples, out of their private means". And Jesus accepted their gifts.*

*Secondly, Jesus was very careful about how He spent the money He received. **John 13:29** gives us an indication of how Jesus spent His money. When Jesus gave some instructions to Judas there, the other apostles thought that He was directing Judas to spend the money as Jesus had always spent His money. That is: (1) To buy what was needed; and (2) To give to the poor". This must be our guideline always, in the way we spend our money.*

*The apostles followed Jesus' example exactly. They also trusted their heavenly Father to provide all their needs. So they never told anyone about their personal needs or the needs of their ministry - either verbally or by letter (for that would have amounted to indirectly hinting about their need for money). Whenever the apostles urged the churches to take a collection of money, it was always for distribution to the poor believers - and never for any other purpose (See **2 Cor.8** and **9** and **1 Cor.16:1-3**). Some people misquote **1 Timothy 5:17, 18** and teach that pastors and Christian workers must be paid a good salary. But what do those verses actually say?*

"The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of DOUBLE HONOUR, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing', and 'The laborer is worthy of his wages'".

Those verses do not say anything about money at all, They only teach that elders who work hard at preaching must be given double honour by their flock. If this verse were referring to money, then it would mean that God was commanding churches to pay their leaders double the salary that others in the church get!! That is ridiculous! Paul was actually teaching believers here to appreciate and respect the elders of their churches. He was saying, "Give them due honor, just like you allow your ox to eat the grain that it is threshing".

So we see that an elder's primary wages are honour (appreciation and gratitude) from his flock - and not money.

*This is similar to the exhortation Paul gave in **1 Thessalonians 5:12,13** "Honor your leaders who work so hard for you….overwhelm them with appreciation and love"(Message Paraphrase).*

*Paul does however speak about the financial support of Christian workers in **1 Corinthians 9:7-18**. There he says: "Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat the fruit of it? Who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock? If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?"*

But Paul then continues, to say, "Nevertheless, we did not use this right , but we endure all things so that we will cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ. It is true that the Lord has directed that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living from the gospel. But I have used none of these things. It would be better for me to die than to have any man make my boast an empty one. For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion. Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel. For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward; but if against my will, I still have a stewardship entrusted to me. What then is my reward (my salary)? Just this, that, when I preach the gospel, I can offer it without charge to everyone. So I do not make use of my rights as a preacher of the gospel."

So Paul never preached for a salary or for gifts, but because he was "compelled by his love for Christ" and because "God had committed the stewardship of the gospel to him". He wanted to give the gospel freely to others, without any charge, lest it appear as though God were charging people money for hearing the gospel. And he asked others to follow his example (See ***1 Cor.11:1*** *and* ***Phil.3:17****).*

So we see that the New Testament does teach that a servant of the Lord can receive gifts for his support (as Jesus Himself did). But at the same time, we also see that:

(1) No Christian worker was ever paid a monthly salary. Jesus never promised His disciples a salary. The apostles never received a salary. They trusted their heavenly Father to move people's hearts to support them financially (just as in Jesus' case). Such a life of faith was essential for them if they were to have power in their ministry. It also protected them from covetousness.

(2) In situations where Paul saw that this provision of support was being abused by preachers, he decided not to take any money from anyone but to support himself, so as to protect the testimony of the gospel that he was preaching. He says in ***2 Cor.11:7-13*** *(Living): "I preached God's Good News to you without charging you anything. I didn't ask you for anything, for the Christians from Macedonia brought me another gift. I have never yet asked you for one cent, and I never will. And I will tell everyone about it! I do this because I want to cut out the ground from under the feet of those who boast that they are doing God's work in just the same way we are. God never sent those men at all; they are "phonies" who have fooled you into thinking they are Christ's apostles."*

We see here that Paul did receive gifts occasionally - when the Christians in Macedonia (Philippi) voluntarily sent him some money. But he never took any money from the Corinthian Christians (as we see above), because he wanted to show them that he was different from the fake Christian preachers in that place. Paul never ever asked anyone for financial support at any time - and he never hinted about his financial needs either.

Paul did not take any money from the Thessalonian Christians either. He says in ***2 Thess.3:8-10****: "We never accepted food from anyone of you without paying for it; we worked hard day and night for the money we needed to live on, in order that we would not be a burden to any of you. It wasn't that we didn't have the right to ask you to feed us, but we wanted to show you firsthand how you should work for your living".*

*Paul did not take any money from the Ephesian Christians either. He says in **Acts 20:31-35**: "All these three years I was with you, I did not seek for anyone's money or clothes. You know how I worked with my own hands to support myself and the men who were with me. I showed you by working hard in this way, that we must help the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus that, `It is more blessed to give than to receive.' "*

Every servant of the Lord must ensure that he manifests the attitude of Christ in relation to money, as Paul did.

In every one of our CFC churches that God has planted, all the (more than) 150 leaders/elders support themselves. None of them has ever received a salary. This new-covenant pattern has worked perfectly for us for 45 years now (from 1975 when the first CFC church was started, and right up to now - 2020) - both in large cities around the world as well as in the poorest villages in India. This stand of ours has saved us from being infiltrated by covetous preachers who quote Scripture and exploit people for their money.

The above is the stand that all of the Lord's servants took in New Testament times. But Christendom has drifted away from this standard through the centuries. Today, many pastors and preachers keep urging people to give them money and write moving letters to their sponsors (often with false statistics about conversions) expecting more and more financial support.

*Because of this wrong attitude to money found among Christian leaders, God's anointing is missing from most of Christian ministry today and there is no revelation from heaven in the ministry of most preachers. No-one can serve God <u>and</u> money (**Luke 16:13**).*

*The Lord said that only one those who are faithful in money-matters would be given the true riches (**Luke 16:11**) - the riches of Divine revelation and the anointing of the Spirit.*

There is yet another important principle that we must bear in mind: A servant of the Lord must never receive money as a gift from unbelievers or from anyone who is poorer than him. Any gift given by a poorer person must always be put into the church's offering box and never used for oneself.

Here is a checklist that we have placed on top of our offering boxes in CFC Bangalore: Before you give your money, please check:

1. Are you a born-again child of God?
2. Do you have enough for your family's needs?
3. Are you free from debt (other than house-loans)?
4. Are you reconciled with all people?
5. Are you giving cheerfully?

You can go to the following link to see the Scriptural basis for the above standards: http://www.cfcindia.com/our-financial-policy

We don't judge other churches or preachers who do things differently from us, in this area. That would make us Pharisees. But we ourselves seek to strictly preserve the standards that we see in the life of Jesus and in the lives of the apostles.
He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Amen.

Source: https://cfcindia.com/wftw/the-financial-policy-of-jesus-and-the-apostles

Verses that the Church met in homes

Acts 28:30-31

And **Paul remained two years full** in an **house** hired for himself, and received all that came in unto him,

Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all boldness of speech, without let.

Romans 16:5

*Likewise **greet the Church that is in their house**. Salute my beloved Epaenetus, which is the firstfruits of Achaia in Christ.*

1 Corinthians 16:19

The Churches of Asia salute you: Aquila and Priscilla ***with the Church that is in their house****, salute you greatly in the Lord.*

Colossians 4:15

Salute the brethren which are of Laodicea, and Nymphas, ***and the Church which is in his house****.*

Philemon 1:2

And to our dear sister Apphia, and to Archippus our fellow soldier, ***and to the Church that is in thine house****:*

The issue with the modern **ROPC** is the amount of **God's money** that is used for building costs, paying staff salaries (benefits, etc.), paying for the utilities and upkeep, etc. ***that is not Biblical***.

To learn more about what the **Biblical Church** is please go to **LawAndMankind.com** and watch the **3-part video series**, the **Biblical Church Life,** on the **What is the CHURCH?** page.

We will look more into this topic in the next chapter.

HOW HAS THE CHURCH BEEN PERVERTED?

To answer the question **"How has the Church been perverted?** we need to pick up where we left off in the previous chapter regarding the church meeting in ***homes*** versus ***buildings***.

We have to look at whether the **Religious Organization Profit Centers (ROPC)** are being good stewards of **God's money**.

I know of one local **ROPC** that has the following financials for **2022**:

- Total annual revenue **$48,424,820**
- Total expenses **$39,691,826**
- Total assets **$100,153,913**
- Total liabilities **$55,866,725**
- Net assets **$44,287,188**

Nowhere does the financial paperwork that I have shares what each salary is for all the staff, *so you have to wonder why*? **Why does an ROPC not post the salaries, benefits, bonus, etc. of all STAFF? WHY HIDE any funds going into the ROPC?**

Then you have to ask why is that kind of money needed?

Then ask why so many denominations?

James 1:27 is very clear what pure religion and undefiled before God is:

Pure religion and undefiled before God, even the Father, is this, to visit the fatherless, and widows in their adversity, and to keep himself unspotted of the world.

If we collected all God's money that is spent on buildings, salaries, upkeep etc. of the ROPC how many orphans and widows could we take care of?

I personally tried to do as scripture says to confront a brother in sin and for 2 years attempted to get a meeting with the person who was supposed to be the shepherd but never was able to meet with him. Those that were supposed to be elders protected him and would never set up the meeting.

Why incorporate?

When a **ROPC** incorporates they are **NOW a business** and not the **Biblical Church**. The IRS has even declared that a Church is not required to have anything to do with filing.

Are those that are part of an **ROPC**, whether the organizer or attendees, are you serving a false god just like the Israelites when becoming a 501c3. I would encourage you to go to **HushMoney.org** to learn WHY you are serving a false god, but I will share a few points below from that website on the **"501c3 Facts"** page.

Churches Are "Automatically Tax-Exempt"

According to IRS Code Section 508(c)(1)(A):

Special rules with respect to section 501(c)(3) organizations.

(a) New organizations must notify secretary that they are applying for recognition of section 501(c)(3) status.

(c) Exceptions.

(1) Mandatory exceptions. Subsections (a) and (b) shall not apply to—

(A) **churches**, **their integrated auxiliaries**, **and conventions or associations of churches**.

This is referred to as the "mandatory exception" rule. Thus, we see from the IRS' own publications, and the tax code, that it is completely unnecessary for any church to apply for tax-exempt status. In the IRS' own words a church "is automatically tax-exempt."

Churches Are "Automatically Tax-Deductible"

And what about tax-deductibility? Doesn't a church still need to become a 501c3 so that contributions to it can be taken as a tax deduction? The answer is no! According to IRS Publication 526:

Organizations That Qualify To Receive Deductible Contributions

You can deduct your contributions only if you make them to a qualified organization. To become a qualified organization, most organizations **other than churches** and governments, as described below, must apply to the IRS.

In the IRS' own words a church "is automatically tax-deductible."

Churches Have a Mandatory Exception To Filing Tax Returns

Not only is it completely unnecessary for any church to seek 501c3 status, to do so becomes a grant of jurisdiction to the IRS by any church that obtains that State favor. **In the words of Steve Nestor, IRS Sr. Revenue Officer (ret.):**

"*I am not the only IRS employee who's wondered why churches go to the government and seek permission to be exempted from a tax they didn't owe to begin with, and to seek a tax deductible status that they've always had anyway. Many of us have marveled at how church leaders want to be regulated and controlled by an agency of government that most Americans have prayed would just get out of their lives. Churches are in an amazingly unique position, but they don't seem to know or appreciate the implications of what it would mean to be free of government control*." - **from the Forward of In Caesar's Grip, by Peter Kershaw**

More proof the RPOC does not obey God

The most glaring point to me is the **ROPC**, *and all involved*, when the **ROPC** bowed to Baul and everyone stood by and let **public servants** deceive you into not worshiping God by closing the doors during the hoax of Covid which again proves the **ROPC** is not the **Church** of the **Bible**!

Are you participating in an ROPC for your comfort and anonymity, in a big setting where there is no accountability, and at least 90% of the same people show up at the main meeting every week in a building that was UNBIBLICALLY built using God's money?

How can any of this be of God?

God will not be mocked!

CONCLUSION

Jesus said in **John 14:15**

"If ye love me, keep my commandments."

Are we listening to God or man?

We are fractured as a nation because we have wondered from God and He warned us of destruction when we do not heed **Hosea 4:6:**

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast refused knowledge, I will also refuse thee that thou shalt be no Priest to me: and seeing thou hast forgotten the Law of thy God, I will also forget thy children."

How we could heal our land is by having the Body of Christ meet in small groups in homes where we would hold each other accountable daily and if we followed the Biblical Church it would spread across the nation and we would not be deceived like we are today.

Matthew 22:36-40

36 Master, which is the great commandment in the Law?

37 Jesus said to him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

38 This is the first and the great commandment.

39 And the second is like unto this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

40 On these two commandments hangeth the whole Law and the Prophets.

Mark 16:15 and 16

15 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

Are you going to be obedient to God and love those organizing or attending the **ROPC** by sharing the Truth of God's Word to them?

Jesus never was paid a salary, had benefits or had a retirement planned for Him. Now I know there are those who will say – well He knew He was going to be crucified as the Savior of the World so he had no need for monetary gain.

The REALITY was Jesus was about His Fathers business and knew the Father would supply all his needs.

Do those organizing the **ROPC** really love their neighbor as themselves when the staff makes more in salary, benefits and retirement plans than most that attend the **ROPC**?

Are fruits of those organizing the **ROPC** that of false prophets or those of spreading the TRUE Gospel of Christ of doing the Father's will?

Will those organizing the **ROPC** enter the kingdom of heaven or not?

Matthew 7:15-21

15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns? or figs of thistles?

17 So every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, and a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

20 Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

21 Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth my Father's will which is in heaven.

If you attend a **ROPC** does the OPEN financials detail the salary, benefits, retirement plan etc.?

If not, why do you attend an **ROPC**?

It is very easy to find out what the average income is in any geographic region and compare it to the income of the staff of an **ROPC,** if the **ROPC** will be transparent and if not then WHY ATTEND THE **ROPC**?

Financial records should be provided to everyone that attends an **ROPC**! Jesus was NEVER secretive in these matters so why are those organizing the **ROPC**?

To truly understand **doctrinal truth** I would recommend reading the following from the ***Christian Fellowship Church***:

The Truth That We Believe

*We are commanded in the Scriptures to pay close attention to ourselves and to our teaching, for only thus can we ensure salvation for ourselves and for those we preach to (**1 Tim. 4:16**).*

Our life and our doctrine are like two legs that give stability to our Christian life. Both legs should be equally long, as in normal human beings. Generally speaking in Christendom, we find most believers over-emphasize one or other of these two 'legs'.

*When it comes to doctrine, we are commanded to "handle the Word of truth accurately" (**2 Tim. 2:15**). Many are careless in their study of the Scriptures and so are imbalanced in their understanding of doctrine.*

The truth of God is like the human body. It is perfect only when every part is found in its correct size. Not all truths in Scripture are equally important. To give but one example: To speak in tongues is not as important as loving other believers. If anyone doctrine is over emphasized at the cost of another, then the truth that we proclaim will be as ugly as a body with an oversized eye or ear!! Besides, such overemphasis will also lead us to become heretical in our beliefs. It is important therefore that we handle God's truth accurately.

It would have been simple if we could have just said that we believe the truth as it is found in God's Word (in the 66 books that comprise the Bible). That is the truth. But since the truth of God's Word has been twisted and corrupted by the cunning of Satan and men, it becomes necessary to amplify and explain what exactly the Bible teaches.

*God's Word, unlike mathematics and science, cannot be understood by mere intellectual study, apart from the revelation of the Holy Spirit. This revelation, Jesus said, is given only to babes (the humble) and not to proud intellectuals (**Matt. 11:25**). This was why the Bible scholars of Jesus' day could not understand His teaching. Most of today's Bible scholars are also in the same boat - and for the same reason!*

*At the same time, we must use our minds too, for we are commanded to be "mature in our understanding" (**1 Cor.14:20**).*

So it is only a mind that is totally submissive to the Holy Spirit that can understand God's Word aright.

God wants all His children to be totally free in every way. But many believers are in bondage to so many sinful habits and human traditions. One reason for this is that they read God's Word so carelessly.

*The more diligent we are to understand God's Word, the more the truth will set us free in every area of our lives (See **Jn. 8:32**).*

Most believers are very careful when it comes to investing their money. But they are very careless when it comes to studying the Scriptures. This shows that they value money more than God. Such believers will obviously go astray in their understanding of God's Word.

*We are told clearly that all Scripture has been given in order to make us `perfect' (**2 Tim. 3:16,17** KJV). So, we could say that those who are not interested in Christian perfection will also not be able to understand God's word aright (see **Jn. 7:17** also). The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and God reveals His secrets only to those who fear Him (**Psa. 25:14**).*

The Truth Concerning God

The Bible teaches that God is One and also that there are three Persons in this One God.

Since numbers belong to the material world, and since God is Spirit, our finite mind cannot grasp this truth fully, even as a small cup cannot contain the water in an ocean. A dog cannot understand multiplication - how three ones when multiplied can still be one: 1x1x1=1. Neither can we understand how God can be Three Persons and yet One God. A dog can understand only another dog. He cannot understand a man fully. In the same way, a god that could be explained and understood by our human reason would only be another man just like ourselves. The very fact that the God of the Bible transcends our reason is the clearest evidence that this is indeed the truth.

*The truth of the Trinity is clear from the first verse of the Bible, where the word for `God' is plural in the Hebrew - `Elohim'. We also see it in the use of the words `Us' and `Our' in **Gen. 1:26**. The light is focused more clearly at the baptism of Jesus, where the Father (voice from heaven), the Son (Jesus Christ) and the Holy Spirit (in the form of a dove) are all present (**Matt. 3:16,17**).*

*Those who say that Jesus Himself is Father, Son and Holy Spirit cannot explain how He could then have done His Father's will on earth, while denying His own will (**Jn.6:38**).*

Unitarians who believe that God is just One Person, and who therefore baptize in the Name of "Jesus only" are therefore denying that Jesus came as a Man.

*The Bible says that the one who has the right teaching, has both the Father and the Son, and that those who deny either the Father or the Son have the spirit of the Antichrist (**2 Jn. 9**; **1 Jn. 2:22**).*

*In Christian baptism, Jesus commanded us specifically that we were to baptize in the threefold Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (**Matt. 28:19**), the Son being identified as the Lord Jesus Christ (**Acts 2:38**).*

The Truth Concerning Christ

*The Scriptures teach that Jesus Christ existed as God and was equal with God from all eternity (**Jn. 1:1**) and that when He came to earth as a Man, He voluntarily chose NOT to exercise some of those powers that He had as God. This is what is meant by the expression, "He emptied Himself" (**Phil. 2:6,7**).*

*Consider a few examples that prove this: God cannot be tempted by evil (**Jas. 1:13**). But Jesus allowed Himself to be tempted (**Matt. 4:1-10**). God knows everything. But Jesus said when He was on earth that He did not know the date of His own second coming (**Mt. 24:36**). He also had to go near a fig tree in order to see if it had any fruit (**Matt. 21:19**). If He had used His power as God He would have known that the tree had no fruit from afar! God's wisdom is unchanging and eternal. Yet, it is recorded twice about our Lord Jesus that "He grew in wisdom" (**Lk. 2:40,52**).*

All these verses indicate that Jesus had "emptied Himself" of many of the powers of God, when He came to earth. But even though Jesus emptied Himself of these powers when He came to earth, yet in His Person He was still God. Obviously it is impossible for God to ever cease being God, even if He wanted to do so. A king can go and live in a slum giving up his rights as a king. But he would still be the king. So with Jesus.

*The clearest proof of Jesus' Deity when He was on earth, is seen in the 7 recorded instances where He accepted worship from others (**Matt. 8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 15:25; 20:20; Mk. 5:6; Jn. 9:38)**.*

*Angels and God-fearing men do not accept worship (**Acts 10:25,26; Rev. 22:8,9**). But Jesus accepted it - because He was the Son of God. The Father revealed to Peter that Jesus was the Son of God even while on earth (**Matt. 16:16,17**).*

*Concerning Jesus' humanity, **Hebrews 2:17** is very exact when it states that Jesus "was made like His brethren in all things". He was NOT made like the children of Adam, for then He would have had an `old man' like the rest of humanity. (`Old man' is the Scriptural phrase for which many unfortunately use the unScriptural expression `sinful nature').*

*Jesus did NOT have a sinful nature , for He did not have a human father. Jesus was born of the Holy Spirit, and was holy from conception (**Lk. 1:35**).*

*Jesus' spiritual brothers are those who do the will of God (**Matt. 12:49,50**) - who are born of the Spirit (**Jn. 3:5**) and who have put off the old man and put on the new (**Eph. 4:22,24)**. But we, the brothers of Jesus, do have a will of our own and Jesus was made like us "in all things". He had a will of His own too, which He denied (**Jn.6:38**).*

*When we were born, as Adam's children, we were all born with an old man. The old man can be likened to an unfaithful servant who opens the door of our heart to the desires of the flesh (that can be likened to a gang of robbers) that seek to enter it. When we are born again, this old man is killed by God (**Rom. 6:6**). But we still have the flesh through which we are tempted (**Jas. 1:14,15**). The old man is now replaced by a new man who resists the desires of the flesh and seeks to keep the door of the heart shut against this `gang of robbers'.*

*Jesus was tempted in all points as we are, and overcame (**Heb. 4:15**). However He did not come in "sinful flesh" but only "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom. 8:3). We have lived for many years in sin. The sinful habits that we have acquired through many years of sinning cause us to sin unconsciously even after we are born again.*

For example, those who have used many swear words in the past may find such words coming out of their mouths without conscious choice, when they are under pressure; whereas those who never used swear words in their unconverted days do not find themselves using such words even unconsciously. Similarly, those who have read much pornography find that they have a greater problem with dirty thoughts and dreams than others who did not indulge themselves to that extent.

*Jesus never sinned and He did not have any unconscious sin in His life either. If He had sinned even once unconsciously, He would have had to offer a sacrifice for that sin (as we read in **Lev. 4:27,28**). Then He could not have been a perfect sacrifice for our sins. He never sinned - consciously or unconsciously.*

The doctrine of the Person of Jesus has been the point of controversy throughout church history and many a heresy has been proclaimed concerning it. Some have overemphasized His Deity, to the point where they cannot see Him as a Man who was tempted exactly like us. Others have overemphasized His humanity, to the point where they have cancelled out His Deity.

*Our only safeguard to avoid both these heresies is to stand with the whole revelation of God in the Scriptures and to stop where it stops, lest we "go too far" (**2 Jn.7,9**).*

*Jesus coming to earth as a Man is a mystery. It is foolish for us to try and analyze this truth, beyond what we are told in the Bible. To do so would be as foolish and irreverent an action as the Israelites curiously peeping inside the ark of God (a type of Christ) - an action for which God killed those who did (**1 Sam. 6:19**).*

*Jesus said that He had come to earth in order to deny His own will and do His Father's will (**Jn.6:38**). This shows that Jesus had a human will that was opposed to His Father's, (**Matt.26:39**). Otherwise He would not have had to deny that will.*

*Jesus too was tempted in all points exactly like us (**Heb. 4:15**). But because He never consented in His mind to any of those temptations, He never sinned (**Jas. 1:15).** Every temptation that we can ever face, was faced and overcome by our Lord Jesus during His earthly life.*

*We all know how difficult it is to live without sinning for even a single day! So we could say that the greatest miracle Jesus did was to live without sinning for more than 33 years - even though He was tempted exactly like us at every point, daily. He resisted sin unto death, and He received grace from the Father from His birth (**Lk. 2:40**) until His death (**Heb. 2:9**), because He sought for it with loud crying and tears (**Heb. 5:7** and **12:3,4**).*

*As our Forerunner, Jesus now calls us to follow His example in taking up the cross - in putting our self-will to death - every day (**Lk. 9:23**).*

We fall into sin because we do not resist sin seriously enough, and because we do not ask the Father for grace to overcome. Today, we are not asked to follow Jesus in the external aspects of His life - being a carpenter or a bachelor - nor in His ministry - of walking on the water or raising the dead - but rather in being faithful as he was in overcoming sin.

*The Holy Spirit inspires us to make two confessions concerning Jesus Christ - one, that He is Lord, and the other, that He came in the flesh (**1 Cor. 12:3**; **1 Jn. 4:2,3**). Both confessions are equally important, but the latter even more so, because we are told that the identifying mark of the spirit of the Antichrist is that he does not confess that Jesus came in the flesh (**2 Jn. 7**).*

*Today, the Man Christ Jesus (**1 Tim. 2:5**) is the "first born among many brothers" (our Elder Brother), and His Father is our Father too (**Rom. 8:29**; **Jn. 20:17**; **Eph. 1:3**; **Heb. 2:11**). Jesus did not cease to be God when He came to earth (**Jn.10:33**). He did not cease to be Man when He went back to heaven (**1 Tim. 2:5**).*

The Truth Concerning Salvation

*The word of God speaks of "salvation" in three tenses - past (**Eph. 2:8**), present (**Phil. 2:12**) and future (**Rom. 13:11**) - or in other words, of justification, sanctification and glorification.*

Salvation has a foundation and a superstructure. The foundation is forgiveness of sins and justification.

*Justification is more than the forgiveness of our sins. It also means that we have been declared righteous in God's eyes, on the basis of Christ's death, resurrection and ascension. This is not on the basis of our works (**Eph. 2:8,9**), for even our righteous deeds are like filthy rags in God's sight (**Isa. 64:6**). We are clothed with the righteousness of Christ (**Gal. 3:27**). Repentance and faith are the conditions for being forgiven and justified (**Acts 20:21**).*

*True repentance must produce in us the fruit of restitution - returning money, things and taxes due, that are wrongfully in our possession (that belong to others), and apologizing to those we have wronged, as far as possible (**Lk. 19:8,9**). When God forgives us, He also requires that we forgive others in the same way. If we fail to do this, God withdraws His forgiveness (**Matt. 18:23-35**).*

*Repentance and faith must be followed by baptism by immersion in water, whereby we publicly testify to God, to men and to demons that our old man is indeed buried (**Rom. 6:4,6**).*

*We can then receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit, whereby we are endued with power to be witnesses for Christ by our life and our lips (**Acts 1:8**). The baptism (fullness) of the Holy Spirit is a promise to be sought for (**Lk. 11:13**) and received by faith, by all of God's children (**Matt. 3:11**).*

*It is the privilege of every disciple to have the witness of the Spirit in his heart that he is indeed a child of God (**Rom. 8:16**) and also to know for certain that he has been filled with the Holy Spirit (**Eph. 5:18**).*

*Sanctification is the superstructure of the building. Sanctification (meaning `being set apart' from sin and the world) is a process that begins with the new birth (**1 Cor. 1:2**) and that should continue throughout our earthly life (**1 Thess. 5:23,24**). This is a work that God initiates in us through the Holy Spirit, writing His laws upon our hearts and minds (**Heb. 8:10**); but we have to do our part, working out our salvation with fear and trembling (**Phil. 2:12,13**). It is we who are to put to death the deeds of the body through the power that the Spirit offers us (**Rom. 8:13**). It is we who have to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and the spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God (**2 Cor. 7:1**).*

Where a disciple is radical and wholehearted in cooperating with the Holy Spirit in this work, the work of sanctification will progress rapidly in his life. The work will obviously be slow or stagnant in the life of one whose response to the Spirit's leadings is sluggish. It is in times of temptation that our wholeheartedness in desiring sanctification is truly tested.

*To be sanctified is to have the righteousness of the law fulfilled inside our hearts - and not just externally as under the old covenant (**Rom. 8:4**). This was what Jesus emphasized in **Matt. 5:17-48**.*

*The law's requirements were summed up by Jesus as loving God wholeheartedly and loving our neighbor as ourselves (**Matt. 22:36-40**).*

*It is this law of love that God now seeks to write in our hearts, for that is His own nature (**2 Pet. 1:4**). The outward manifestation of this will be a life of victory over all conscious sin and of obedience to all of Jesus' commandments (**Jn. 14:15**).*

*It is impossible to enter into this life without first fulfilling the conditions of discipleship that Jesus laid down (**Lk. 14:26-33**). These are basically to give the Lord the first place above all our relatives and our Self-life and to be detached from all of our material wealth and possessions.*

*This is the narrow gate that we have to go through first. Then comes the narrow way of sanctification. Those who do not pursue after sanctification will never see the Lord (**Heb. 12:14**).*

*While it is possible to be perfect in our conscience here and now (**Heb. 7:19; 9:9,14**), it is not possible to be sinlessly perfect until we have a glorified body at Jesus' return (**1 Jn. 3:2**). We can be LIKE Him only then. But we must seek to WALK as He walked, even now (**1 Jn. 2:6**).*

*As long as we have this corruptible body, unconscious sin will be found in it, however much we may be sanctified (**1 Jn. 1:8**). But we can be perfect in our conscience (**Acts 24:16**) and be free from conscious sin (**1 Jn. 2:1a**), even now, if we are wholehearted (**1 Cor. 4:4**).*

*Thus we wait for the second coming of Christ and for our glorification - the final part of our salvation, when we will become sinlessly perfect (**Rom. 8:23**; **Phil. 3:21**).*

The Truth Concerning The Church

*The church is the body of Christ. It has only one Head - Christ; and it has only one headquarters - the third heaven. In the body of Christ, every member has a function (**Eph. 4:16**). While some members may have a more important or visible ministry than others, every member has something valuable to contribute.*

*Christ has given to His church apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers to build His body (**Eph. 4:11**). These are ministries and not titles. Apostles are those called and sent by God to plant local churches. They have the first place in the church (**1 Cor. 12:28**) and are thus elders to the elders of the churches within their sphere (**2 Cor. 10:13**). Prophets are those who uncover and minister to the hidden needs of God's people. Evangelists are those who are gifted to bring non-Christians to Christ. They must then bring these converts into the local church, which is Christ's body. (Here is where a lot of modern evangelism fails). Shepherds are those who care for and guide the young lambs and sheep.*

Teachers are those who can explain the Scriptures and its doctrines. These five gifts are for the church worldwide; and from among them, shepherds and prophets are the strength of every local church. The other three gifts can be itinerant (from other localities).

*The leadership of the local church should be in the hands of elders. The New Testament clearly teaches this (**Tit. 1:5**; **Acts 14:23**). `Elders', being plural, implies that there must be at least two in every church. A plurality of elders is necessary for a balance in the leadership of the local church and also for binding the activities of Satan through the power of the Lord's presence (as we read in **Mt. 18:18-20**). One-man leadership of a church is contrary to the teaching of the New Testament. One among the elders may however be the `messenger of the church' (**Rev. 2:1**), if he is gifted with the Word. All believers in a local church must be subject to the authority of the elders of that church in all matters related to the local church (**Heb. 13:17**; **1 Thess.5:12,13**). Jesus forbade His disciples from having titles (**Matt. 23:7-12**). It is against the word of God therefore, to be called Rabbi, Father, Pastor, Reverend, or Leader. The title of `Reverend', in fact, is used only for God in the Bible (**Psa. 111:9 KJV**). Everyone in the church, great or small, is called to be just a brother and a servant.*

*"The church can have meetings for teaching (**Acts 20:9,11**), prayer (**Acts 12:5,12**), evangelism (**Acts 2:14-40**) and also for mutual encouragement (**Heb. 3:13** - where believers who are gifted with the Word can encourage one another - **1 Cor. 14:26-40**). The gift of prophesy must be desired by all who want to exercise it in the meetings (**1 Cor. 14:1,39**). The gift of tongues is primarily meant for personal edification (**1 Cor. 14:4,18,19**).*

*If it is exercised in the meetings of the church, it should always be followed by an interpretation (**1 Cor. 14:27**). The interpretation of a tongue may be a revelation, a word of knowledge, a prophecy, a teaching, or a prayer to God (**1 Cor.14:2-6**). All the gifts mentioned in **1 Cor. 12:8-10, 28** and **Rom. 12:6-8** are needed for the building up of the body of Christ. A church that despises or ignores the gifts of the Holy Spirit will never have them - and will be powerless.*

*Women are permitted to pray and prophesy with their heads veiled in the meetings. But they are not permitted to exercise authority over men or to teach men (**1 Cor. 11:5; 1Tim. 2:12**). The veiling on a woman's head (taught in 1 Cor. 11:1-16) is meant to symbolise:*

(a) That the glory of man is to be covered in the church ("woman is the glory of man - v. 7).

(b) That the glory of woman should also be covered in the church (a woman's hair is her glory v. 15). (Women are aware that their glory (beauty) is in their hair, and that is why many who do cover their heads cover them only partially!)

(c) That she is submissive to the authority of the man (v. 10) - whether husband, father or elder.

*Women must demonstrate the purity of Christ in the way they dress - they must dress modestly and discreetly (**1 Tim. 2:9**).*

*The church also has a responsibility to preach the good news by all means possible, to all whom it can reach, with the aim of making disciples of Christ in all nations (**Mk. 16:15** with **Matt. 28:19**). Evangelism without disciple-making, however, is not the will of God, and is a hindrance to the testimony of Christ on earth.*

*Every local church must also proclaim the Lord's death through the `breaking of bread' (**1 Cor. 11:22-34**). The frequency of this testimony is a matter on which the Word of God gives freedom to each church. But it must never be allowed to degenerate into an empty ritual.*

*Regarding offerings, God's Word is clear that it is wrong to receive money from unbelievers for God's work (**3 Jn. 7**). Offerings must never be taken in meetings where unbelievers are present. All giving by believers must also be voluntary, secret and cheerful (**Matt. 6:3**; **2 Cor. 9:7**). So the best way is to keep a box somewhere in a meeting place where those who want to give can give without being observed. It is wrong to send reports of the work to others, with the intention of obtaining money from them (even if such reports are called `prayer letters'), because Jesus and the apostles never did this.*

*A local church can be unshakable only as it leads disciples to the obedience of faith - to obedience to all of Jesus' commands, particularly the ones listed in **Matt. 5 to 7**. The smallest commandments in the New Testament must also be obeyed and proclaimed with zeal. This is what makes a person great in God's eyes (**Matt. 5:19**).*
*There are many matters on which the New Testament is silent. In such matters we are not to be dogmatic but must give freedom to other disciples to hold their own convictions, while holding our own convictions firmly ourselves (**Rom. 14:5**).*

It is easy to love those who see eye-to-eye with us in all matters. Our love is however tested by our attitude to those who disagree with us. God has not intended that all His children hold the same view on every minor point. Neither has He intended that every local church have the same external form in non-Scriptural matters. The glory of God is meant to be seen in a unity in the midst of diversity. Uniformity is man-made and brings spiritual death. God does not desire uniformity but unity.

*Finally we must remember that the clearest mark of the disciples of Jesus is their love for one another (**Jn. 13:35**). Thus the church must seek to be one as the Father and the Son are one (**Jn. 17:21**).*

All this, in a nutshell, is the truth that we must be firmly founded on.

*We know that this is the truth, for it has liberated all those who have accepted it wholeheartedly (**Jn. 8:32**).*

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